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Cover photo sources

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Source: CN

The *Wisconsin Rail Issues and Opportunities Report* summarizes critical rail transportation issues that were identified through an aggressive public outreach effort. It reflects input and guidance from a variety of sources including a State Rail Advisory Committee and a Rail Industry and Shippers Advisory Group. The findings from this report—the issues and opportunities for public sector involvement—will serve as a point of departure for the rail component of *Connections 2030*, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's (WisDOT) multimodal transportation plan.

Historically, WisDOT's role in the railroad industry has been limited, in part, because the majority of railroads in Wisconsin are private operators subject to federal interstate commerce regulations. WisDOT currently improves roadway/railway crossing safety, helps retain or improve freight rail service in partnership with private railroads and local units of government, and supports intercity passenger rail service.

Topics covered in this report affect or involve various rail system components such as the rail network, intercity passenger rail, safety, and items requiring specific legislative initiatives. The topics are grouped and listed below.

Category	Topic
Rail network	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Rail congestion in Chicago➤ Intermodal facilities➤ Rail corridor and service preservation➤ Publicly owned rail infrastructure
Intercity passenger rail	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Level of intercity passenger rail service
Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Hazardous materials➤ Motor vehicle/train crashes and trespassing
Legislative	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Railroad taxation➤ Railroad regulations

Other issues were identified as emerging rail issues but were not analyzed in detail pending the results of proposed legislation or emerging policies. They include the following:

- Development of commuter rail systems will generate the need for a policy regarding state participation in commuter rail systems.
- Passage of a ban on the use of locomotive horns at roadway/railway crossings could result in significant expenditures for upgrading warning devices in Wisconsin.
- A proposal to reduce mercury emissions could significantly affect the demand for coal, Wisconsin's single largest freight rail commodity.

This report introduces opportunities that could help WisDOT to accomplish its mission of developing and maintaining a safe, efficient and balanced transportation system. The report focuses on opportunities to maximize the strengths of individual transportation modes functioning as part of a cohesive transportation network. The ultimate goals are to maintain and enhance the quality of life for Wisconsin's citizens and improve the competitiveness of its businesses.